

DUXBURY

Alden ancestors seeking control

Goal: Preserve historic homesite

By ANNE TRAFTON

The Patriot Ledger

To a casual observer, the grassy knoll behind the playing fields at Duxbury's Alden Elementary School doesn't seem very significant.

But atop the hill, marked off by ropes strung through a set of wooden posts, is the site of the original home built by Pilgrim John Alden, in 1627.

"It's probably one of the most historic sites not only in Duxbury, but in all of Massachusetts," said Alden Ringquist, acting director of the Alden Kindred of America.

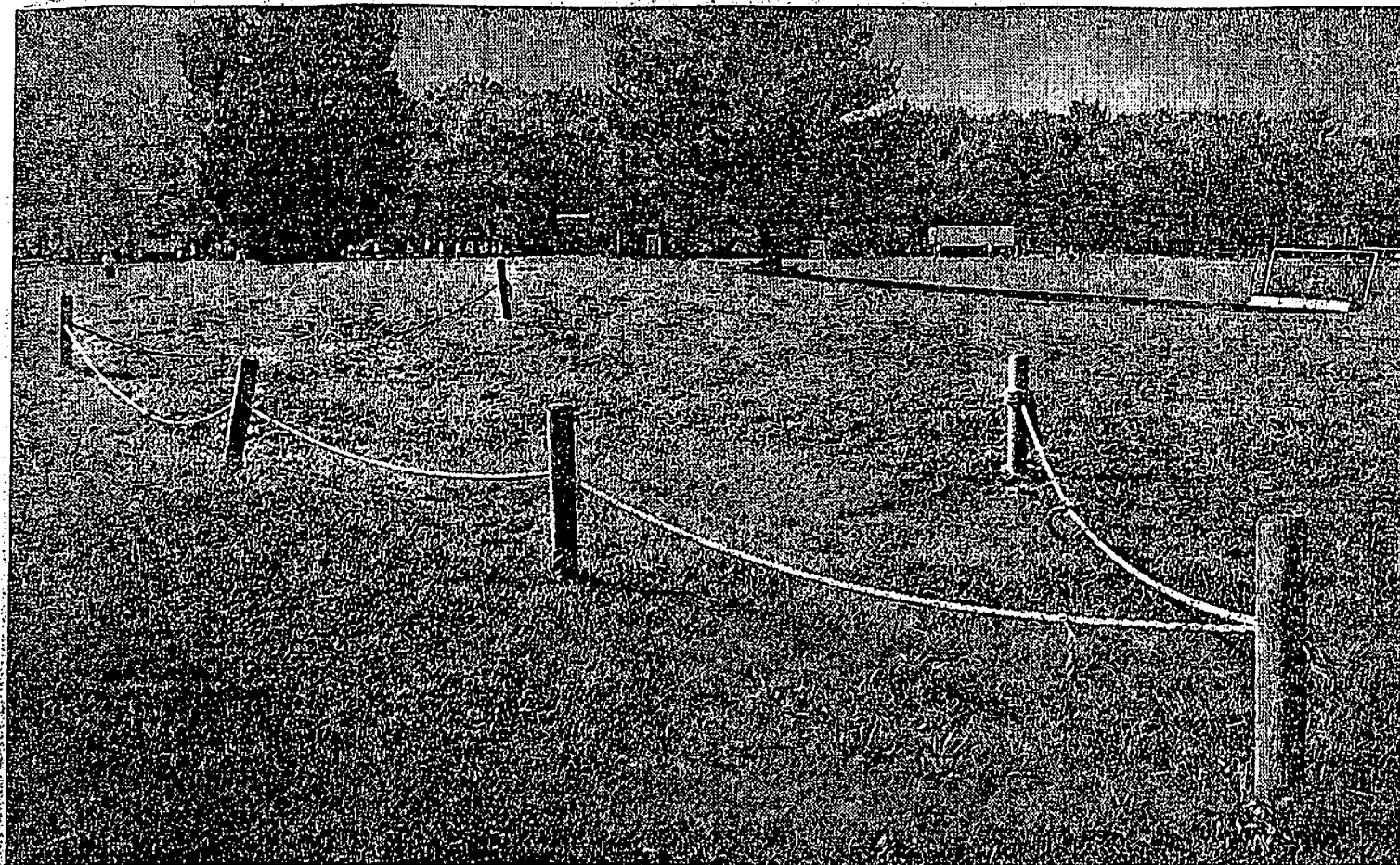
The Alden Kindred, which owns the nearby Alden House, wants to acquire control of the location of the original home and preserve it as a historic site.

"This is something that would be a great asset to the town and to the schoolchildren," Ringquist said. "It's not being preserved now."

The site has fallen into disrepair, Ringquist wrote in a recent letter to the board of selectmen. Ringquist and Alden Kindred President Linda Osborne attended selectmen's meeting Monday night to discuss the possibility of gaining control of the site.

The land, which the town owns, is controlled by the school committee. The knoll where the 10-by-38-foot Alden home once stood is now surrounded on three sides by baseball and

Please see ALDEN HOUSE — Page 10



AMELIA KUNHARDT/The Patriot L

Posts outline the site of the original Alden House, which now is surrounded by playing fields behind Duxbury's Alden Elementary School. The Alden Kindred, an organization of descendants of John and Priscilla Alden, wants to acquire control of the site, but town officials are concerned about the possible impact on the playing fields.

Alden ancestors seek control of homesite

■ **ALDEN HOUSE**
Continued from Page 9

soccer fields.

Woods separate the rear of the site from the Bluefish River.

The Alden Kindred has yet to discuss its ideas with the school committee, but it has met with the school department's business manager, Mickey McGonagle.

McGonagle said the school department would need to evaluate the impact that granting control to the Alden Kindred would have on the playing fields.

"Playing fields are scarce in Duxbury," he said. "If you took away some of the playing fields, you'd have to find another place to do that sport."

At their meeting Monday, selectmen expressed reservations over the prospect of visitors crossing school property to get to and from the site.

"Opening it up to the public has some concerns," said Selectman Betsy

Sullivan, who added that she thought preserving the site was a "wonderful" idea.

Ringquist said he does not anticipate large numbers of visitors at the site.

"It's probably one of the most historic sites not only in Duxbury but in all of Massachusetts."
Alden Ringquist

About 800 to 1,000 people visit the Alden House museum each year, and most of them come during the summer, he said.

The Alden Kindred has not determined exactly what sort of control it is looking for, according to Ringquist. The town could give the site to the group, the group could lease the land, or a partnership between the town and

the group could be arranged.

"We're very flexible with what we can do," Ringquist said. "We're exploring now to see what options we have."

Town Manager Rocco Longo suggested that it would be best if the town retained ownership of the land. Any land transfer would have to be approved by town meeting.

If the Alden Kindred gains control of the site, it would like to restore and protect the site and enhance public access.

"We'd like to fix it up so it would look something like the original site," Ringquist said.

In 1627, John Alden was granted 100 acres of land in Duxbury and built a home there for himself and his wife, Priscilla Mullins Alden.

John and Priscilla, along with their 10 children, lived in the house until 1653, when the family built a larger home about 200 yards away.

That structure still stands. Aldens

lived there until 1907, when the Alden Kindred purchased it.

The Alden Kindred, which is made up of thousands of descendants of John and Priscilla Alden, now operates the home as a museum on Alden Street.

Excavations in the 1960s revealed the location of the original home and produced many Pilgrim artifacts. Ringquist said the Kindred would like to launch further excavations if it is given control of the site. Any artifacts found would belong to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

The Kindred is preparing to apply for national landmark status for the Alden House. The distinction is held by only about 2,000 sites in the country, including Daniel Webster's law office at Winslow House in Marshfield.

"There are not very many towns that have a national landmark," Ringquist said. "This is where it all started."

Anne Trafton may be reached at atrafton@ledger.com.